UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1842
2 March 1995

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General says United Nations cannot impose peace and might concentrate its peace-keeping action in places where political will exists.

+ Sarajevo humanitarian airlift suspended after two planes hit by small arms fire; routine clearances for aid convoys withheld by Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats.

+ UNOSOM withdrawal completed ahead of schedule; UNDP says United Nations agencies are continuing their work in Somalia.

+ UNEP releases report on link between poverty, environment, population growth and sustainable development to coincide with World Summit for Social Development.

+ Assembly of International Seabed Authority elects President, discusses Council membership.

+ Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination expresses concern over increased racial and ethnic conflicts.

+ Students and Teachers gather at Headquarters to mark fiftieth anniversary of United Nations and UNESCO.

* * *

As the United Nations did not have the capacity to impose peace, it might have to concentrate its peace-keeping action in places where political will existed, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today. The Secretary-General was delivering the keynote address at the Vienna Conference on Peacemaking and Peace-keeping Operations for the Next Century. He noted that quantitative and qualitative changes in UN peace-keeping operations had made them more expensive, complex and dangerous. There was a great need to establish a workable system of international security, the Secretary-General concluded.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

At the Conference, which was sponsored by the Austrian Government and the International Peace Academy, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alois Mock, announced that his Government would conclude, in the near future, standby arrangements with the United Nations. The President of Austria, Thomas Klestil, recalled his country's involvement in peace-keeping operations while noting that investing in people might be the best preventive action for peace.

* * *

The humanitarian airlift into Sarajevo was suspended today, after two planes taking off and landing at the airport were hit by small arms fire, according to a United Nations spokesman. The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) has not received routine clearances for its aid convoys next week from either the Bosnian Serbs or the Croatian Serbs. The clearances are normally obtained one week in advance, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the National Security Council of Croatia reaffirmed the Government's decision not to extend the mandate of UNPROFOR beyond 31 March. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, speaking in Vienna, said that UNPROFOR's withdrawal from Croatia would make the presence of United Nations peace-keepers in Bonsia and Herzegovina practically impossible.

* * *

The last Pakistani troops with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) have left Mogadishu and remaining civilian personnel and equipment have been taken safely offshore, a United Nations spokesman said today. United States marines and Italian troops from the joint task force had begun withdrawing from the port.

Somali "technicals", possibly under the control of the inter-clan joint committee formed to run the port and airport seemed to have gained control of the port following the UNOSOM pull-out and there had been only small scale looting, the spokesman said. The United Nations had taken out much of its equipment, which was necessary to run the facilities, but had pledged to bring it back within 48 hours, if the Somali people demonstrated they could run the port and airport for the common good.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Coordinator for Somalia, Erling Dessau said United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations would continue to work in the country following UNOSOM's withdrawal. While international staff have been temporarily relocated from Mogadishu, UN offices remained open and local staff were implementing programmes there. He said Somalia was not only Mogadishu and agencies and international staff were working hard to provide development assistance to rural communities where the local people were making an effort to rebuild their country.

* * *

(more)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has released a paper on the link between poverty, the environment, population growth and sustainable development to coincide with the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, 6 to 12 March. The paper is titled "Poverty and the Environment: Reconciling short-term needs and long-term sustainable goals". A compilation of ideas and options from environmental economists and development experts, it elaborates an integrated approach to development, focusing on whether the needs of the least advantaged and vulnerable members of society are being addressed.

UNEP worked towards understanding the driving forces in the cycle of environmental degradation and poverty, according to Executive Director, Elizabeth Dowdeswell. However, often passions were exacerbated when experts from vastly different perspectives attempted to grapple with the question, she said. She hoped the report would be a basis for needed dialogue and debate, not just in Copenhagen but in every capital afterwards.

* * *

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority has elected Hasjim Djalal (Indonesia) as President of its first session. It also decided that regional groups should discuss informally the number of Assembly vice-presidents to be elected and submit candidates for those posts at a later meeting.

The Assembly, which is holding its first session in Kingston, Jamaica, also adopted its agenda and decided rules of procedure would be discussed informally in a small working group that represented all regional interests.

The President was later asked to help draw up a list of countries qualifying for membership in the Council of the Assembly under specific interest categories defined by the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the implementation of Part XI of the Convention.

* * *

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination has called for urgent measures to bring down the ever-increasing number of racial incidents. Meeting in Vienna yesterday, the Commission expressed concern about the racial conflicts and violence taking place in so many parts of the world.

Several members stressed that many of the conflicts taking place in various regions had an ethnic or racial background. The killing of gypsies with explosives in Germany, the conflict in Bosnia, Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan, Mexico and Chechnya were frightening. Experts said some States used ethnicity as a vehicle for political policies. Governments should educate their citizens to prevent racial conflicts and violence.

* * *

(more)

Fifty students and teachers from around the world will meet at Headquarters 1 to 6 March, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and UNESCO - the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. They will meet staff and experts from the Organization to gain a better understanding of vital world concerns and the role of the UN in addressing them.

The students will also participate in the annual students' conference organized by the United Nations International School (UNIS) on the topic "Women in Society: A Natural Balance, An Unequal World". The students and teachers will consider concrete ways to mobilize schools to observe the fiftieth anniversary of the UN and UNESCO and the 1995 Year of Tolerance.

* *** *